

NSS REPORT CALLS FOR DEMOCRATISATION OF SCHOOLS

All institutes of higher education—colleges of education, polytechnics, colleges of further education and universities—should be reorganised into a comprehensive system. This is one of the proposals contained in the National Secular Society's submissions to the James Committee on Teacher Training. The NSS says it is unfortunate that colleges of education are dominated by lecturers whose experience is limited to grammar schools, as this is largely irrelevant to modern educational needs. The idea of exclusive concentration on a limited range of facts and techniques is being increasingly abandoned in schools and should be abandoned in the sphere of higher education. The NSS claims that the taxpayer is subsidising Church colleges to the tune of about £18 million a year, and recommends "that public money should no longer be available to those colleges of education which are divisive and discriminatory".

Educational Studies

At present Educational Studies usually centre around psychology, sociology, philosophy and the history of education. An understanding of child and adolescent psychology is obviously essential, but course content is usually too thin and there is not enough opportunity for observation of children, individual research and practical experimentation. Sociology courses which attempt in a couple of terms to give an introduction to the theory of sociology are at best misleading and at worst a waste of students' time. Students might better acquire sociological perspectives and techniques through investigating particular social issues and problems. Courses in the history of education are fortunately not as common as they were. Studies of the educational legislation of the past 150 years are, like all historical specialisations, a minority interest and of little relevance to teaching. Of more use would be information on the law as it affects teachers today. Such courses do not seem to be common.

Educational Studies should consist of an integrated approach to all major educational issues, which must include wider themes such as the environment, poverty and war. These courses should have many options built into them to enable students to develop particular interests. All the Educational Studies courses should as far as possible arise from and be related to school experience, so avoiding theorising unrelated to practice.

It is now well established that the grading of Teaching Practice is arbitrary, unreliable and unpredictable. No objective standard for the assessing of teaching has been found or is likely to be. Assessment in the sense of feedback to the student concerning his ability and progress is, of course, valuable. But any form of assessment that attempts to rank students on their teaching ability is not only unfair but may also create anxiety in the student and an unwillingness to reveal failures when help is needed.

We recommend that the student should spend the second year of training working in a school alongside an experienced teacher (who should be given a special allowance for this work). During this year college-based seminars would give students the opportunity to talk about their work and discuss their problems.

Teaching experience should not, of course, be limited to this middle year. The entire course should be much more school-related. Colleges and schools must co-operate much more closely in order to provide as much opportunity as possible for students to come into contact with children and their schools throughout their training, spending at least a day a week in schools in their first and third years.

Closer links would be welcomed by most schools. Some Heads, however, resent the intrusion of students. If necessary schools should be compelled by law or by regulation to take a number of students in proportion to the number of permanent staff. Heads should not be allowed to obstruct the training of individual student teachers simply because they do not like their hairstyles or the cut of their clothes—one student teacher was recently turned away from his Teaching Practice school because he had leather patches on the cuffs and elbows of his jacket!

Increasing democratisation of schools depends on the colleges producing teachers who value democracy and are accustomed to the idea of participation. It is essential that student teachers should be encouraged to think critically about their own education and their involvement in the running of their colleges should be welcomed. Their participation cannot be achieved by token representation. We recommend that there should be at least 50 per cent student representation at all levels of college government.

Rules and Regulations

The personal lives of students should be no concern of the college authorities unless help is specifically requested. Colleges of education are noted for their archaic rules, particularly regulations concerning residence. When a college of education recently announced that in future students of either sex could visit friends in the hostel study-bedrooms, there were protests from local councillors who fulminated about "organised brothels" and "love nests for students". Student teachers are over 18 and are entitled to the same privacy and freedom as other adults, regardless of the obsessional neuroses of local councillors or geriatric high court judges.

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CHURCH AND STATE IN SOUTHERN IRELAND

BILL STEPHENSON

Northern Ireland has seldom been out of the world's headlines during the last three years. The Government, churches and apparently unassailable institutions have been shaken to their foundations. Less dramatic activities are also taking place in the rest of the country. The secretary of the Irish Humanist Association has contributed this article on the contemporary situation south of the Border.

The Irish have an ingrained sense of loyalty, expressed in the bitter allegiances which a bewildering variety of nationalistic, religious, and political organisations are able to claim; there is an illegal second army, condoned by civil and military authorities, which is actively supported everywhere and which releases propagandist press statements with astonishing regularity. But even this organisation is now split into several groups!

The haste with which the so-called "plain people of Ireland" rush to defend the image of Ireland as a Catholic country, i.e. a society which is not quite as "tarnished" or "impure" as for example England evidently is, is perhaps another manifestation of this sense of loyalty, or else it must be inspired by a genuine belief that Ireland as a society does have an existence which is somehow more religiously pure than others. But of course the Irish are as susceptible as anybody else to the smut of western civilisation—the prostitutes, the unreported sexual offences, "Irish divorce" (desertion and separation) the exported pregnancies. And the civilising Pill is available, albeit through a loophole in the law which permits the importation of "menstruation regulators" as medicines.

The ban on the importation of contraceptive devices (Jack Lynch says there's no law against using them—just obtaining them!) is the subject of current controversy, initiated by Senator Mary Robinson who has been trying, so far without success, to introduce into the Irish senate a bill to amend the law; unlike divorce this is a measure which only requires a Government majority to put into effect, but the Government has yet to decide what to do; it's a political hot potato which is still judged to be too hot to handle and so the people will continue to be without what both Ireland and the Vatican have agreed in the United Nations to be a basic human right.

Privileged Position of RC Church

The idea of the republic as a Christian society is further contradicted by the sort of legislation which is in the process of being introduced at the moment; I refer specifically to the Forcible Entry and Occupation Bill which is intended to deal with the intrusion of squatters in private property (there is already legislation to cover the occupation of public property) but which creates a new offence of guilt by association—i.e. you're liable to prosecution if an association of which you are a member makes a statement in support of, for example, a group of students who are occupying their college, unless you specifically dissociate yourself from the statement—and which also gives the police wide powers of arrest without warrant.

Not surprisingly the same kind of paradox is apparent in the official constitution of the republic which is enacted "In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority and to whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and States must be referred." But Article 44 is the gem: "The State acknowledges that the homage of public

worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion." On the other hand though it also states: "The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religion, profession, belief or status." Again, not surprisingly, this latter clause is effectively meaningless. For example, in the case of the swearing of the oath in court it is most inadvisable to ask to affirm. Another example is the case of child adoption where couples both have to be practising Christians in order to be accepted as prospective parents. Essentially therefore the legal basis of Irish society is derived from the religion of the majority and is applied in the spirit of that religion.

Given the male bias of all religions it is perhaps not surprising that the Women's Liberation Movement should be gaining such support in Ireland, especially in Dublin. Much maligned elsewhere, the movement seems to be regarded in a different light here where it has great scope for its energies. Its manifesto *Chains or Change* deals with the old chestnuts of divorce and contraception as well as mentioning the equally important matters of rights to property, legal entity, and taxation, and of course most important, pay differentials and job discrimination. There's a lovely example of bureaucratic insanity on the part of the civil service where women automatically have to give up their jobs on marriage, but where the rules amazingly go on to state that two illegitimate children are permissible, or three in wartime!

The Godless One Hundred

So what of the infant Irish Humanist Association in this crazy, mixed-up country of ours? A recent article in the *Dublin Evening Press* spoke of the "godless one hundred", and projected an image of an association of middle class anarchists with the sympathy of a silent minority of approximately 20,000; the middle class bit is unfortunately accurate and the problem of attracting the interest of the other social strata is one with which the Association is currently occupied. A recent lecture in memory of Owen Sheehy Skeffington, and given by Lord Richie Calder, attracted a capacity crowd of at least 600 of all sorts and types; this, as well as being a reflection of the very wide support enjoyed by the late Senator, is also an indication that there is in fact an audience for rationalist ideas. At the moment the Association is planning the next conference of humanists in Ireland which will probably take place in mid-November next on the theme of the Open Society. The first conference two years ago was about human and civil rights in Ireland and last year's, at which Margaret Knight was the main speaker, was on the subject of education. As well as these the Association organises monthly meetings either privately or publicly, and produces a monthly news sheet for circulation to members and associate organisations. Hardly anarchic, but the IHA is also affiliated to the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Citizens for Civil Liberties which might explain the tag-

There is no doubt that there is immense scope for humanist and rationalist activity in Ireland and that the Irish Humanist Association does more than barely skim the surface. But there's a famous saying which goes something like this: "What we must realise is how infinitesimal is what we can do and how infinitely important it is that we should do it."

GOD AND WAR

S. CARTER McMORRIS

It is clear that a belief in God or gods has had important historical bearing on war as a human institution. Ironically, or naturally, there has always been a link in men's minds between divinity and government—symbolised by the theory of "the divine right of kings". Thus, men in political and religious power have always manipulated the religious beliefs of the masses into a willingness to die for God and country—to the benefit of those in power.

Implied in the exhortation to serve God and country is the belief that God is "on our side". At this point the irony becomes evident. The major combatants in each of the two great wars of this century prayed to the same God for victory, and the Germans, having lost both wars, must now have second thoughts about just whose side God was on. On the other hand, in the two local wars of more recent date, in which the United States has engaged with "underdeveloped", infidel peoples in Korea and Indo-China, the most that can be claimed is stalemate, not victory, for God's chosen people.

Any religion which, like Christianity, teaches belief in an after-life (especially if that after-life is enhanced by serving God and country in war) is particularly useful to the ruling classes. Thus, the early popes, who uniquely blended the political and religious, conquered Europe in the name of their version of divinity. When, however, in the Crusades, they attempted to convert the Islamic heathens, the most that could be claimed for Jehovah was equal power with Allah, the belief in whom strongly persists to this day in that part of the world in which the Christian faith came to a military halt six centuries ago.

Of course, this involvement of God in the mortal activity of extending political and economic power by military means, can boomerang or backfire. I have always felt that one of the primary reasons why Japan lost its part of World War II was the belief of its soldiers that death in battle, whether by their own hand or by that of the American enemy, assured for them a place in the Shinto heaven. Often in the heat and emotion of battle, Japanese soldiers or officers committed hara-kiri, thus greatly increasing their losses and making victory for the God-trusting, but not suicidal, Americans somewhat less costly.

Divine Guidance for Murder

Regardless of what appear to be the lessons of the past, this faith in the participation of a power beyond man and in the mutual mass murder and destruction of war has continued to the present highly sophisticated military-industrial complex, which I suggest could more accurately be called military-industrial-political-religious system. Today, as throughout history, American troops are blessed by the chaplains of their varied Judaeo-Christian faith as they march, drive or fly forth against the un-Christian Buddhist or atheist foe in Indo-China. The lesson of the present is that, so far at least, Buddha and Jehovah have reached an accommodation or compromise.

Since the United States is waging this war for our usual high ideal of making the world safe for democracy, we seem once again to consider our military adventure as an act of God. It is difficult for some, though, to see any

divine guidance in the conduct of our troops at My Lai three years ago. In the court-martial of lieutenant Calley, it has been proven as undisputed fact that non-combatant civilians—old men, women and children were slaughtered there by the hundreds. Additionally, while much is made of this one trial, the most telling reaction has come from North Vietnam, which charges that My Lai was just routine in the conduct of the way by our God-fearing troops.

After we were successful, in World War II, in keeping the world safe for our brand of Christian democracy by defeating, with massive help of the atheistic Russians and Chinese, the equally Christian but undemocratic Germans and Italians and the un-Christian Japanese, we led our allies in the institution of the new doctrine of "war crimes". Many of the best military and even industrial and political minds in the defeated countries were made to pay before the firing squads of this New Inquisition, for atrocities committed by their troops.

The most significant charge against the Germans was that they had decimated the God-believing but Christ-denying Jews in their midst, for reasons which still seem vague but must have been outwardly politico-economic, and subtly racial-religious. The charges against the Japanese, on the other hand, dealt mostly with alleged massacres by their troops of civilian or military personnel of countries they conquered in their victorious sweeps in the early years of the war.

Justice, military Style

In our treatment of the Japanese war criminals, we carefully evolved the General Yamashita Doctrine, under which the named general and many others of his hapless colleagues were made to pay the supreme penalty although it was not shown that they actively participated in, counselled, or even knew about the murderous acts of individual units of soldiers, who, as already stated, thought that death in battle, perhaps even of the enemy, was a divine act. We applied a similar approach in our famous Nuremberg Trials of leading Nazis. As to our conquered foes, we adopted a holier-than-thou attitude that we, the "good guys", should sit in God-like judgment over the "bad guys" for their un-Christian conduct.

It was very easy for the whole of the American people to sit by proxy at the trials to the death of German and Japanese war criminals. Then came My Lai, and charges that military agents of this God-serving country (troops who doubtlessly prayed and were prayed for as they marched forth) had committed wanton massacres of civilians.

In the investigation of our own acts at My Lai, some could find the hope for a new day in military justice, a vindication of the War Crimes Trials, a step forward in civilisation. However, one by one the charges were dropped against all but two of our men, Sergeant Mitchell, who was found not guilty by a military jury, and Lieutenant Calley

(Continued on back page)

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editor: WILLIAM McILROY

103 Borough High Street,
London, SE1

Telephone: 01-407 1251

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London: Collets, 66 Charing Cross Road, WC2; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N1; Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street (Angel Alley), E1; Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, N1; Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC2; Freethinker office, 103 Borough High Street, SE1. **Glasgow:** Clyde Books, 292 High Street. **Brighton:** Unicorn Bookshop, 50 Gloucester Road (near Brighton Station).

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High St., London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 5p stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

Minority Rights Group's latest report—on the Southern Sudan and Eritrea—just out, price 30p from MRG, 36 Craven Street, London, WC2.

EVENTS

Humanist Holidays. Summer Centre in the Lake District is now full. Youth Camp being planned for 24 July until 1 August in Salop. Details: Marjorie Mephram, 29 Fairview Road, Sutton, Surrey (telephone 642 8796).

The Progressive League, Halden House, Dunchideock, Exeter, 7-14 August, Summer Conference. Details from Ernest Seeley, c/o Progressive League, Albion Cottage, Fortis Green, London, N2.

Rationalist Press Association. Annual Conference at St Peter's College, Oxford, Friday, 3 September—Sunday, 5 September. Subject: "Rationalism—an Answer to the Problems of the 1970s"; speakers: D. J. Stewart, Colin Campbell, Christopher Evans, Leslie Sklair. Fees: Resident, £8, Student members of the RPA, £5; Non-resident, lectures and meals, £4.50; lectures and coffee, £1. Return coach fare London-Oxford, £1.50. Applications and payment to the General Secretary, Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, London, N1 8EW. Telephone 226 7251.

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NEWS

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE HUMANISM

David Tribe, chairman of the *Freethinker*, spoke on *The Challenge Before Humanism* at a meeting of South Place Ethical Society in London last week. He recalled that a few years ago the media discovered, under the refurbished name of humanism, secularist, rationalist and ethical movements that had in fact been around for a very long time. Some regarded us as apostles of the new gospel for the new morality; in the yellow Press we were presented as demons who would drag the nation and the world back into pre-Christian depravity. The two roles were equally thrilling and attracted "the usual intake of bandwagon acolytes—people who would join any movement so long as, like a detergent, it was represented as new and improved".

Newcomers who wanted novelty or kicks found that in humanism they had chosen a very slow bandwagon. "Those who march only with the big battalions soon found that they had been recruited into an army that was both smaller and worse equipped than they had been led to believe. The foaming waves of CND and the Committee of 100 were on the wane, but a new tide was bringing in flower power, pupil power, Women's Lib, Gay Lib, anti-Vietnamese War demonstrations and infinite other opportunities for demonstrating, sloganeering, badge-wearing, banner-waving and dropping out or dropping into new sensations. If the organised churches were on the decline, the older religions and quasi-religions were making a comeback: Eastern mysticism, emanating from a bewildering number of gurus, black and white magic, witchcraft, Druidism and astrology. Most recently of all Christianity is staging a comeback via the 'Jesus freaks' of California"

Mr Tribe went on to say that while secularization and humanization of society tend to rise as religious devotion falls, and vice versa, the secular humanist movement does not rise too. When people are indifferent to religion, substitute religions or alternatives to religion lose their appeal. "Today philosophical—as distinct from emotive—religion is in a decline and the humanist movement is declining with it. Emotive religion or quasi-religion is doing good business, but humanism has rarely been able to compete on these terms".

Referring to the concept of the "open society" Mr Tribe said the way in which this has been promoted in the humanist movement—as distinct from the presentation in Sir Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*—offers small chance of success as either a means of recruitment or a useful undertaking in itself. The movement has always been keenly interested in civil liberties, and has supported the work of specialist organisations in this and other spheres. If the "open society" is more than this it is either a pipe dream or would create the conditions whereby a "pragmatic" demagogue could seize power in an ideological vacuum. Every stable society is based on ideological presuppositions which are enshrined in its fiscal, foreign and social policies. The very notion of civil liberties came about when freethinkers of the Enlightenment and the nineteenth-century radical movement successfully challenged the theocratic authoritarian view of the world.

AND NOTES

Humanists who hark after such concepts should ask themselves whether, in the light of the immense and growing resources of the churches, the financial anxieties of the humanist movement and the New Counter-Reformation already being organised by the Vatican, they can afford this luxury.

SUBSIDIES FOR CHURCHES

It is no great surprise that the General Synod of the Church of England has asked its Standing Committee to initiate discussions with the Department of the Environment with a view to securing government subsidies for the repair and maintenance of historic churches. Despite suitable noises about the need for reforms and changes in Church-State relationships in the last two or three years, only those whose vision is completely blurred by the ecumenical smoke-screen have failed to see that the proposed reforms would in no way threaten basic Church privileges. And certainly they would not prevent the Church from trying to plunder public funds when an opportunity presented itself.

The growing concern and interest in the protection of buildings and whole areas from the property developers and others who are busily raking in their dividends from Sailor Ted's philistines, is commendable. And of course churches of historic and architectural interest should be protected and kept in good repair. But if this is to be done at public expense the buildings should become public property. Some are already being used for more beneficial purposes than as centres for the propagation of Christian superstition. Former church buildings are being used as art galleries, community centres and libraries. In the north London borough of Islington residents like myself who are enthusiastic theatregoers and atheists are remarkably fortunate: St George's Church, a Victorian pile in Tufnell Park Road which was built in more godly times to accommodate 1,100 worshippers, is being turned into a theatre.

During the Synod discussion the Provost of Wakefield lamented that "for many years ordinary men believed that the Government paid the clergy." Now although Anglican clergymen do not receive their salaries from a government the ignorance of "ordinary men" is understandable. The Church of England enjoys a particular status through grants, rate reductions, subsidies, tithe, payment for chaplains, and many other privileges. It has a special position in State ceremonies; the bishops have seats in the House of Lords; its consistory courts have remarkably wide powers. So Anglicans can hardly complain if, to ordinary mortals, their church appears to be the ecclesiastical wing of the Civil Service.

With privilege usually comes wealth, and the C of E has an enormous annual income. It can well afford to pay for the upkeep of its churches. The Church comes cap-in-hand to the Government for the maintenance of historic churches, but remains discreetly silent when it closes a church and sells the valuable site for redevelopment. It is to be hoped that attempts to get more public funds will be resisted; unfortunately politicians of all parties are inclined to back away even when the doddering old C of E bares her gums.

CANCELLED ORDER

In these inflationary times it is always a pleasure to record an act of thrift and enterprise by a government department or local authority. One such example has come our way, and the Cumberland Education Committee and the warden of Workington Teachers' Centre, P. Gartside, are the parties concerned.

Last March Mr Gartside sent an Official Order, number 85162, to the National Secular Society, requesting a copy of *Sex Education—the Erroneous Zone* (25p). It was despatched with an invoice on 25 March. On 15 July the booklet was returned in a rather dog-eared condition to the NSS together with a letter from Mr Gartside in which he said: "I return herewith the book 'Sex Education' which was ordered by this Centre earlier this year. Unfortunately, we do not require this book at the Centre and apologise for any inconvenience caused".

Mr Gartside does not say why the book is no longer required. Some may suspect that the motive is censorious rather than economic. It certainly is a curious example of economy in view of the cost of staff time, postage, etc. Whatever lies behind this cancellation the ethics of the operation seem rather dubious.

HIERARCHY'S VICTIM

After months of pressure by the hierarchy one of Italy's most outspoken catholic magazines *Il Regno* (*The Kingdom*) has been forced to close down. *Il Regno*, which had an editorial staff of five priests and was published twice weekly, was owned by the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Superior was recently called to Rome and informed that the paper's policy had caused Pope Paul "great sorrow".

The priests refused to tone down their policy of speaking frankly about the Church and social problems. They claim they were dismissed because of a campaign by the Vatican "to repress progressive elements in the Church".

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Students who break the law and are convicted in the courts should not be punished again by their college. If the court thinks that the student should be deprived of his normal way of life, then he will be sent to prison. If he is not, then it is the duty of the college community to help him in his rehabilitation, not to ostracise him.

Colleges with a religious foundation number one third of the total, and the Church of England now claims that one in six student teachers is at a Church college. There is evidence to suggest that non-believers are less likely to be offered a place at these colleges. There is no justification for reserving one college place in six for those dedicated to indoctrinating children with the Christian religion.

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BOOKS

THE WELSH EXTREMIST

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Welsh and Scottish Nationalism have been an interesting fashion in post-war politics. Parliamentary candidates campaigning for a "free" Wales or Scotland have attracted more votes, especially at by-elections, than have been comfortable for the two main parties. Even influential politicians like Jo Grimond have been attracted to the idea of a separate Scottish nation population about 5,000,000); and Wales (population about 2,500,000) has recently been provided with a special Welsh Office and Secretary of State. Both Welsh and Scottish Secretaries have the status symbol of a seat in the Cabinet. The reason for the existence of these two Offices is hardly the pursuance of more efficient administration, as it is always difficult to attract the most able men to jobs of small scope. Nor can the cause be remoteness as communications have never been better or easier, and Cardiff, which is the seat of the Welsh Office, is only a little further from London than Sheffield.

The causes of nationalism and separatism are not as obvious or as practical as that, and in this little book Ned Thomas sets out to tell us what they are in the Welsh case, especially that of the Welsh speaker. Yet if the political radical enquires why Wales or Scotland are considered to be nations, the answer comes only obliquely through this book or any other nationalist literature, for it derives from a view of history peculiar to these times, but which the authors of these tracts accept uncritically.

The study of history is the study of records; where there are no records there is no history to study. Unlike the Saxons, the Normans kept meticulous records, for they were very property-conscious—our legal system developed out of their arguments about property. The England which William I claimed as his personal possession was an amalgam of numerous small states which had been unified under successive Danish and Saxon administrations. These states had yielded their sovereignty and their borders largely undocumented; the existence of Wessex had been forgotten until re-discovered by Thomas Hardy. The two outlying areas approximating to the present Wales and Scotland, not having by then been penetrated very deeply by the Saxons, did not officially form part of William's new possessions and their union took place later during a new era of legal formulae and paper-work. Not having any title-deeds, the old Norse and Saxon states have vanished; the two which have come in since the Norman conquest have acquired boundaries drawn by Acts of Parliament which are preserved for all to see. It is the existence of these Acts and the records of events leading up to them which are the cause of Welsh and Scottish separatism. The reading of history and the documented preservation of the boundaries has led to the belief that not only are these two nations distinct from an English one, but that the inhabitants are different too—even though Wales and Scotland contain within their own borders greater regional differences between populations than England does.

The maintenance of unrealistic distinctions solely due to the survival of historical documents is not confined to the existence of the Welsh and Scottish Borders. In our modern literate society, where history and historical novels make favourite reading, this kind of subjectivity is much more common than seems generally realised. People fall in

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love with history, and they want it back. The retrospection is, of course, confined to those periods for which enough records survive to enable events, and especially personalities, to come alive in the imagination; and since such records do not go back far before archaeology has to take over, the field of vision is very restricted. But the effects of historical romanticism upon modern politics have become widespread and are almost always harmful. Much of the present trouble in Northern Ireland, the philosophy of Gaullism, the exacerbation of the Fleming-Walloon dispute, the establishment of the State of Israel, are each instances of wanting to put the clock back to times long passed and wishing to re-create or recapture situations long since replaced by others.

Who wants to put the clock back, and why? Since history is a literary pursuit, we would expect the initiators of these movements to be literary men, and this indeed is what we find. They are poets, professors, and other academics, with a strong sprinkling of antiquarian-minded men of religion. Steeped in their studies of history, the past has come to assume for them as much if not more significance than the present. A thousand years seem but as yesterday, and somewhere events have taken a wrong turn. They believe in destiny and theories of historical determinism, and that their task—disregarding all that has happened in between—is to put history back on the right road, in order that what was or what might have been should be re-enacted or fulfilled.

It is obvious that if attempts are going to be made to restore a status quo ante, culled from whatever period of history may catch the fancy, then people are going to suffer. This does not deter the revivalists, for the draw of romance is too strong. Nationalism, whether geographical, linguistic or sectarian, is the suitable vehicle for their ardour. Its symbols and sentiments arouse pride in the homeland and its inhabitants (especially in the military prowess of their ancestors) and contempt for the values and competence of other peoples.

Welsh nationalism is no exception, but here the record unhappily shows them that their ancestors lost their fights. The Scots point to the battle of Bannockburn and can forget that economic necessity forced the union of 1707. The Welsh had only one general who achieved much against the English—Owain Glyndwr, a nationalist hero—but he was in the end defeated and died in obscurity.

One compensating reaction is to allege that the Welsh princes and generals were unfairly defeated and badly done-by, and from this derives the plaintive tone of the propaganda about oppression and exploitation, and the foolish and irritating expressions of superiority by those who identify themselves with the English. A second reaction is to put exaggerated emphasis on peace and peaceful intentions—a Sword of Peace at the Gorsedd, a Temple of Peace at Cardiff, bards at Eisteddfods. Thirdly, there is the appeal through historical allusions to the assertion of a cultural distinction in the existence of the Welsh language.

In the areas where Welsh is still everyday speech it owes its survival to the translation of the Bible into Welsh by early nonconformist missionaries. Time, prosperity and in-

REVIEWS

creasing secularism have eroded its use, and like Gaelic it would soon, as common speech, have gone the same way as the pre-Celtic languages which itself it replaced perhaps 2,000 years ago. But the main demand for the reinstatement of Welsh has not come from those traditional users who look upon Welsh primarily as a means of communication; its origins lie elsewhere, in a movement known as the Celtic Revival. Begun by English dilettantes of the eighteenth century it brought Scottish songs to Haydn, and drew Mendlessohn to Fingal's Cave. It also begot the still prevalent notion that the Celts were a race, whereas they were a widely diffused linguistic group of no particular race.

Nonconformism had eradicated traditions of song and dance in Wales, but the Welsh were nearer than the Gaels. So they had thrust upon them the idea that they were descendants of the Druids, who were possessed of divine wisdom inherited from a Golden Age; and that the Celtic tongue was the means by which they communicated their knowledge and inspiration. From being looked upon only as a bar to the furtherance of good education, the language gradually acquired an aura of sanctity. An ancient language of such mystical merit and a history which shows almost unrelieved defeat are a powerful combination for any historical revivalist looking for a cause. Just as it is clear that Mr Thomas' antecedents are the Celtic revivalists and their Druids, so in the authorities he quotes and in the protagonists of the movement for the promulgation, reinstatement and official recognition of the language we immediately recognise our old friends the poets, dons and preachers. The culture represented by the Welsh language becomes the repository for every kind of Arcadian dream and escapist ideal, while there is the brand of scorn which only the secure and comfortably-off can hold for the benefits of material wealth for others. English is but the hated language of commerce, and English speakers who have done no more harm than happening to live west of the Welsh border are despised "Anglo-Welsh". Only to Welsh-speakers are revealed the knowledge and profound emotions which will make the land a better place; a Welsh-speaking Welsh nation is the goal and the salvation.

As with the other historico-political movements this is a dream world, and consummation can only be attained by victory over the living present. By the end of the book Mr Thomas has some doubts, some stirring of practical consciousness. It takes a religious mysticism to believe that heaven-on-earth can be obtained through the medium of the Welsh language. It is clear that in the political context as well as in the sheer real-life difficulties of shoring it up, the language ceases to represent a culture and becomes a cult. This explains the fanaticism with which the language is at present being promoted, and the hostility, disruption and unhappiness which the campaigners are willing to generate to achieve their aim. It is tragic that people can be so persuaded with imaginings conjured out of ancient literature, and in the name of history attack and abuse their fellow-creatures. Doubly unfortunate are the Welsh, to have a past out of which they are urged to construe grievance and indignity; and to have a language which through being a plaything for preservationists has become a religion in which that past is enshrined.

LORD RAGLAN

CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND THE CHURCH

by R. H. Clayton. Lakeland, 35p.

No book is so bad that nothing can be learned from it. *Christ's Kingdom and the Church* teaches us that a Master of Arts can write at the mental level of a Jehovah's Witness. Its well-worn subject is the Bible's wonderful prophecies of the last days, meaning the present and the near future. Mr Clayton knows his Bible, but apparently nothing whatever of the radical scholarship of the past two centuries, since every statement in the holy book is taken literally. We are informed, for example, that "the first eleven chapters of Genesis recount the history of creation and mankind", as if it had never been established beyond dispute that these chapters are Babylonian mythology at second-hand.

As always with uncritical believers, the Old Testament worthies are "great figures in Israel's history", although many of them were scoundrels by ordinary standards of decency. David's murder of Uriah it is true, does come in for slight disapproval, but one gathers that the man after God's own heart might reasonably be excused an occasional indiscretion of this kind.

A notorious flaw in the gospel narrative is the way in which it is built around Old Testament passages which, like the flowers that bloom in the spring, have nothing to do with the case. Mr Clayton gets round the difficulty with a variant of the old notion of a double fulfilment of prophecy; a desperate device, but one likely to satisfy the readership aimed at.

The author's self-assurance as one of elect is irritating, as is his condemnation of those of his fellow Christians who feel that parts of the Bible might perhaps be understood in an allegorical sense. Knowing himself to be saved, he might, in Christian charity, have refrained from calling liberal theologians representatives of the "wicked one". Satan, by the way, shares with certain holy men the gift of ubiquity. Cast out of heaven, he is nevertheless still there and will shortly be ejected again.

Its brevity apart, just one thing made the reading of this catalogue of puerilities bearable; an ingenious exposition of Daniel 9 : 25, 26. This foretells that the Messiah should be "cut off" 69 weeks from the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem. The commandment was given by Artaxerxes I in the twentieth year of his reign, which was 445 BC (Nehemiah 2 : 1-8). Mr Clayton says that Daniel's "weeks" must be understood as weeks of years. If so, the prophet's three-week fast (Daniel 10 : 2, 3) must have lasted 21 years, but never mind. Seven times 69 gives us 483 lunar years, equal to 476 solar years. This brings us to 32 AD, the year of the Crucifixion. The accuracy of this prophecy would be astounding were it not for the fact that there is not a scrap of historical evidence that the Crucifixion ever took place, or that the gospels existed at all in the first century. But it does prompt an intriguing speculation. Could it be that in this passage in Daniel we have the motive for the placing of a mythical crucifixion at this precise period in history?

R. J. CONDON

LETTERS

Patriotism and Nationalism

G. N. Deodhekar was allowed to use most of the front page (*Freethinker*, 3 July) to publish an open letter to Leo Abse, MP. I wonder if he would have done so had Mr Abse "denigrated" Spain or Germany. Mr Deodhekar is very sensitive about India, and concludes his letter to Leo Abse with the question: "What precisely do you find disturbing about India?"

I am disturbed that Mr Deodhekar is trying to turn the *Freethinker* into a platform for preaching patriotism and nationalism.

DANIEL ARIES.

Highest Common Factor

When I spoke of the "highest common factor" of moral agreement (*Freethinker*, 5 June) I did not mean "highest" in any value-judgment sense. The phrase was simply lifted from the world of mathematics, in the sense that 26 is the HCF of both 52 and 78.

DAVID TRIBE.

(Continued from page 235)

also found guilty after the longest trial in military history. He was sentenced to life at hard labour.

At the time of writing, the American people are reacting with violent emotions in their condemnation of the Calley trial. In letters to editors and telegrams to their representatives in Washington, even to their President, they are saying that Calley should not have been tried, should have been found not guilty, or guilty of a lesser offence, and, at worst, should have been given a minimal, wrist-slapping sentence. They are saying, by implication, that American troops should not have to account for war crimes for which we, in victory, held the whole of the defeated countries responsible, and that when those "on God's side" commit atrocities against helpless civilians, it should be accepted as the fortunes of war. Because the enemy commits acts of harm (upon his own people in this civil war), we are justified in compounding the injury by bombing into oblivion the village homes of human beings ten thousand miles away from us and who present no threat to our homeland.

Because ours is a holy war, we are entitled to drop napalm fire-bombs on soldiers and civilians alike, to destroy vegetation and forestation, which God or nature provided for the sustenance of this basically agrarian country. It is our divine right to kill, maim and destroy, to save the world from the encroachment of godless communism.

This is what is being implied in the support of Calley by the overwhelming majority of the no longer silent Americans. Perhaps they are also saying that no white man should pay such a penalty as life imprisonment when his only crime was against non-whites. The suspicion that this is so may be justified when it is considered that most of those protesting most loudly, screaming with most emotion that Calley is a scapegoat, are those very elements most closely identified by their own admissions and conduct, with America's peculiar brand of racism.

This racism was ironically revealed by Calley himself when, at his trial, he said he was in favour of sparing civilians so that they could be forced to lead his men through minefields—hardly a less atrocious way of being blown to bits to protect the American soldiers.

National Hero

Yet America has reacted by making a new national hero of this confessed murderer. Significantly, a record justifying or even glorifying his conduct has become a national best-seller. The final step in Calley's virtual sainthood occurred when President Nixon himself ordered the convicted man's release from cell confinement during the appeal of his conviction and asserted that he, the President, would have the last word on the nature and extent of Calley's punishment.

There is another side to the coin. If Calley is indeed a scapegoat and since he admits at least some of the charges but blames them on orders of his superiors, the answer is not to exonerate him but to ferret out and prosecute those both above and below him who are guilty of My Lai—and of countless other atrocities.

But where would we stop? If all such incidents are called to account, would there be any soldiers left to continue this war and to get ready for our next walk with God? Should ultimate blame be placed upon the commander-in-chief of our Armed Forces, the President himself? Finally, since the American people as a whole are ratifying and adopting as their own the conduct of our troops at My Lai, who among is not a war criminal?

If by any combination of circumstances God abandons our cause and we lose the Indo-China War or initiate World War III which conceivably still could arise from its ashes, questions such as these might well occur at the next War Crimes Trials. When others than ourselves sit in judgment, perhaps our conduct will be deemed in the same category as that of which we accused the Germans and Japanese: criminal, inhuman, barbaric, atrocious and racist.

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